

Marine Debris Cleanup Program
July 1, 2018 – March 15, 2019
North Carolina General Assembly



Progress Report: March 15, 2019
Prepared by: Rachel Bisesi
North Carolina Coastal Federation
3609 Highway 24
Newport, NC 28570

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Award Date: October 15, 2018
Federal ID #: 58-1494098
Award Amount: \$400,000.00
Contract Period: December 1, 2018 – December 31, 2019

Executive Summary

The North Carolina General Assembly allocated \$400,000 to N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) to partner with the North Carolina Coastal Federation to clean up marine debris after Hurricane Florence. To date, the federation has used \$38,860.03 of these funds for marine debris cleanup efforts. Third party contractors have removed over 20,000 pounds of debris collected in the estuaries of Carteret and Onslow counties, including from state park property and other publicly owned shorelines and islands. Major work is scheduled to begin in April to mechanically remove large and heavy dock debris and several abandoned boats that are scattered throughout Bogue Sound, near Swansboro, and in the Queens and Bear Creek areas.

The federation is also partnering with the N.C. Division of Coastal Management (DCM) to help the state secure approximately \$1 million dollars in additional federal assistance to expand the cleanup effort, and to remove many abandoned boats in coastal waters. Part of this current award, as well as an additional state appropriation of \$250,000 to DCM will be used as required state match for the federal funds. The federation and DMF have received preliminary indication that the federal funding will be awarded to NC; final notification is expected this spring. It is anticipated that federal funds will be made available in late spring or early summer, at which point the expanded cleanup along the entire coast will commence. A formal Damage Assessment Report is being completed that pinpoints the locations of significant debris and abandoned boats in the coastal region from Hyde County to Wilmington as part of this expanded effort.

Purpose of Award

The North Carolina General Assembly approved funding of \$400,000 to remove marine debris from North Carolina coastal waters and public trust properties. The funds are to be used by the North Carolina Coastal Federation to contract with third parties to collect, transport and properly dispose of the debris.

Work Completed to Date

The North Carolina Coastal Federation has completed the following tasks:

(1) Project team meetings: The federation organized or participated in a series of project team meetings to plan implementation of the marine debris project. These meetings included participation from representatives of the N.C. Division of Coastal Management (Braxton Davis, Director and Paula Gillikin of the Division's National Estuarine Research Reserve) along with federation executive director Todd Miller and federation staff assigned to implement the project.

Six project team meetings have been held to date. Two were held in December 2018, two in January 2019 and two in February. Topics included:

(1) Documenting the types and locations of marine debris that needs to be collected; (2) Securing additional federal and state funds to increase collection efforts; (3) Logistical discussions regarding how to use third party contractors for the identification, collection, transport, disposal and tracking of marine debris; and (4) Identification of third party contractors and their capabilities in order to determine how best to secure their services for the project.

(2) Marine Debris Site Inventory: Federation staff worked with community partners including local, state and federal government representatives, Hammocks Beach State Park, local boat captains and state agencies to

conduct a preliminary site assessment of the locations of concentrations of marine debris in public trust areas of the coast impacted by Hurricane Florence. Federation staff and volunteers surveyed estuarine islands by boat and through marsh walks to locate and photograph marine debris that needs to be collected. Boat surveys in Bogue Sound, Bogue Inlet, White Oak River, Bear Creek, and Hammocks Beach State Park were conducted in December and January. One of these surveys included three potential contractors that identified substantial amounts of marine debris including treated lumber, abandoned and derelict vessels, remnants of docks, piers and pilings and multiple other storm debris. With additional financial assistance from the Natural Resources Conservation Service, a more formal Damage Assessment Survey is still being completed that covers a geographic area from Hyde County to Wilmington. This survey will help to focus the use of additional federal and state funds as well as the current cleanup.

(3) Leveraging State Funds for Additional Federal Funding: The federation is working with the N.C. Division of Coastal Management to secure up to \$1 million in additional federal funding from the Emergency Watershed Program run by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to expand the marine debris removal efforts described in this document. This additional federal funding will be matched with a portion of the funding from this project as well as an additional \$250,000 appropriated by the N.C. General Assembly to the Division. If approved by NRCS, this additional funding will allow the federation and Division to include much of the entire coast of N.C. in their cleanup efforts and to remove many abandoned vessels. The request for this additional federal funding has received preliminary approval from NRCS; final approval is expected by May.

(4) Cleanup: The federation has executed contracts with third party contractors to collect marine debris. One marine contractor will use barges, dumpsters, backhoes and other equipment to pick up and remove the larger and much heavier marine debris. This contractor will focus on navigational hazards in waterways, chemically-treated wood debris on publicly-owned islands and shorelines as well as several abandoned boats. This phase of the cleanup is expected to begin in April.

Other contractors are now removing smaller and lighter debris items that mechanical equipment can't remove. Using hand labor, the debris is bagged and removed to landfills in rented dumpsters. These contractors are commercial fishers and other local residents hired at a daily rate. The standard cleanup crew for this part of the project includes a lead contractor who provides transportation and boats, a crew foreman, and five additional watermen for the work crew.

This work crew started February 11 and have mainly focused on publicly owned dredge spoil islands. The crew works five days per week as weather permits. As of March 18, they have collected 19,220 pounds of marine debris. The crew has also removed debris from the 1.3-mile shoreline of Huggins Island, which is part of Hammocks Beach State Park.

Debris items collected include plastic bottles, Styrofoam pieces, aluminum cans, food containers and an assortment of consumer and household debris. Using hand labor, the debris is bagged and taken to a 40-yard dumpster. The federation coordinated the placement of the dumpster with Waste Removal LLC at a local marina in Swansboro. The work crew fills the dumpster at the end of each work day and calls for the debris to be carried to the landfill once full.

The federation has also been working with volunteers to educate about the project and involve them in the cleanup process. Since early February, the federation has organized three volunteer groups to remove 1,705 pounds of debris. Volunteers work for approximately 2 hours at each site.

- On February 9, a group of seven volunteers from the Leadership Carteret class of the Carteret County Chamber of Commerce, a group of business professionals, removed 380 pounds of marine debris off a dredge spoil island directly across from the Cedar Point Wildlife Boat Ramp.
- On February 12, seven community volunteers participated in a shoreline cleanup at the Hoop Pole Creek Nature Preserve in Atlantic Beach. They collected 940 pounds of debris during this event.
- On March 4, nine East Carolina University students participated in a shoreline cleanup at the Hoop Pole Creek Nature Preserve, as part of their alternative spring break program. The students removed 385 pounds of marine debris from the site.

The total amount of marine debris removed as of March 18 by both the work crew and volunteers is 20,925 pounds. The total funds spent on this project, as of March 15 is \$38,860.03.

Future Planned Activities

The work currently underway removing the smaller debris in the Bogue Sound and Swansboro area should be completed in April. The marine contractor should complete his cleanup of the larger debris in April and May.

Based upon the Damage Assessment Survey prepared by NRCS, the federation is in the process of securing new third party contractors to begin cleanup efforts in the estuarine waters that are south of Camp Lejeune in Onslow and Pender Counties. This work should commence this spring. Upon final approval of the NRCS federal funding, the federation and Division of Coastal Management will begin the contracting process to remove vessels and other marine debris that has been found in the public trust areas and waters between Hyde County and Wilmington.

Publicity for Project

This project has been featured by media sources, including local, regional and state media outlets which include the following stories:

- <https://www.coastalreview.org/2019/02/marine-debris-cleanup-underway/>
- <https://www.coastalreview.org/2019/02/watermen-continue-marine-debris-cleanup/>
- http://www.carolinacoastonline.com/tideland_news/news/article_8ee72a9c-3a9d-11e9-9eef-63c15f64ee9b.html
- <https://www.wral.com/after-hurricane-florence-fishermen-reel-in-a-lot-of-debris/18244356/>
- <https://www.wwaytv3.com/2019/03/10/captain-finds-message-in-a-bottle-that-has-ties-to-the-brunswick-beaches/>
- <http://goldsbordodailynews.com/blog/2019/03/08/messages-in-a-bottle-written-by-goldsboro-mother-daughter/>

